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CBC NEWSLETTER

for members of the Carolina Bird Club, Inc., ornithological society of the Carolinas

Volume 43

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Number 5

Mark Your Calendar Winter Meeting Plans

Spring meeting in Asheville, May 1-3, 1998

While we can't make promises, did you know that at least one singing male Connecticut Warbler, accompanied by at least one female, was observed at Jackson Park for several days last May? Join us in Asheville **this May** for the Carolina Bird Club spring meeting.

Accommodations and headquarters will be at the Shoney's Inn at Exit 6 on I-26. Details on reservations and field trips will be included in the January/February Newsletter. -- **John Huggins**, CBC Executive Committee Member-at-Large for Western North Carolina.

Fall Meeting in Elkin, NC, September 25-27, 1998

Officers to be Elected

Election of officers will be on the business agenda of the Carolina Bird Club during its spring meeting in Asheville, NC, May 1-3, 1998.

Offices to be filled are: President, WNC Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, SC Member-at-Large, WNC Member-at-Large and ENC Member-at-Large. All incumbents are eligible for reelection except the WNC Vice-President and Secretary. If you would like to volunteer or have a recommendation, please contact any member of the Executive Committee.

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Come on down to Litchfield Beach January 30-February 1, 1998, for the CBC winter meeting! Field trip plans are underway. Feeling in the dumps? Then go with Gullmeister **Jack Peachey** to the Horry County landfill. If you don't like the smell of that, try the "Sewer Special" to Georgetown, Hemmingway and Conway Sewage Treatment Plants. Other trips planned include a "Pierwatch Special" to four piers, trips to the Huntington Beach State Park jetties and to Santee Coastal Reserve. **Lex Glover** will take a group by pontoon boat to Raccoon Key at McClellanville.

Headquarters for the meeting will be at the Litchfield Inn. Trip details along with forms for reservations and meeting registration will be in the November/December CBC Newsletter.

The Friday evening program will be presented by **Joe Carter**, chairman of the Winyah Bay Focus Area Task Force. Joe successfully led the team that won the permanent protection of Sandy Island, for

which he recently received the first annual Coastal America Partnership Award. His program will include a wonderfully inspiring video "Voices of Winyah Bay." We will all be impressed by the extraordinary dedication and hard work that ordinary people are doing to preserve some of the best bird habitat on the east coast.

The Saturday evening speaker will be **Dr. Jessica Young** who occupies the Spivey Chair of Ornithology at Coastal Carolina University. This chair was made possible by the generosity of long-time CBC members **Frank and Virginia Spivey**. Dr. Young's program is titled "Grouse Tales--Can Too Much Sex Cause Extinction?" You should be forewarned that the video portions of the program may contain scenes of sex and violence between grouse. Parental discretion advised.

See you there! -- **Bob Maxwell**, CBC Executive Committee Member-at-Large for South Carolina.

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A View of a King

by Ann Bailes

Even without the royal ending, it would have been a very successful trip for a pair of novice western birders. My husband, Mike, and I have enjoyed birding in South Carolina and the southeastern U.S. since our marriage twelve years ago; though in the past few years, since the arrival of two children, my observing had consisted mostly of watching what came to the feeder in our back yard. However, this "second honeymoon" in June 1997 to the Pacific Northwest--Washington, Idaho, Montana, Alberta, and British Columbia--was a birding jump start after those years of limited opportunities.

On the porch at my cousin's mountain home we watched Evening Grosbeaks cluster at a feeder so close we could have touched them--and then gorge on sunflower seeds for over ten minutes, unconcerned that we were present without even a screen in between. For years we have watched vigilantly for an Evening Grosbeak here in South Carolina but always seem to miss the winter invasions. Beautiful Black-headed Grosbeaks, Cassin's Finches and one Black-capped Chickadee (with an obviously more ragged chin than our local Carolina Chickadee) came to the feeders also. Steller's Jays moved about in the nearby trees.

Along the roadside, in more open territory, we marveled over the stunning appearance of male Yellow-headed Blackbirds, common in the many marshes. We enjoyed the antics of the equally impressive Black-billed Magpie, knowing that we did not have to deal with its more irritating qualities as do residents of the area. We caught the beautiful chestnut bib of a Swainson's Hawk along a roadside in Alberta, and watched a busy Clark's Nutcracker high in the Rockies of Canada's Banff National Park. And everywhere we saw water, water, water, with ducks abundant in continual roadside ponds. Lesser Scaup and Common



Mergansers were new to us. In a desert area of Washington State, filled with scrubby bushes and chaparral terrain, we admired the powder-blue wings of Cinnamon Teal and Blue-winged Teal flushing from a secluded pond. It doesn't get much better than this. But it did.

Near the end of the trip, in the northern Idaho mountains, we met another cousin, Jenny, a wildlife biologist. Over dinner she casually mentioned "You want to see eagles? I can show you an active nest." I almost swallowed my fork. To see an adult bald eagle was the one thing both Mike and I really wanted. We'd watched a couple of immatures flying near our route earlier in the day, which was a great sight, but to see an active nest--who would have believed we would get this opportunity? Jenny took us along a major road out of town, and when we turned onto a graveled side road, we expected to travel awhile back into the woods and brush. So it was a surprise when she almost immediately said "Park here." We were not a hundred yards off the road, cars were still in plain sight--and in the opposite direction from the road but somewhat camouflaged in the woods, was an eagle's large, unwieldy, messy nest. And an immature was sitting on a limb! "Oh good, the young are still here," she remarked. "I was afraid they might have fledged." We

watched the immature for about twenty minutes, and when it didn't move and nothing else happened, she recommended that we drive toward the lake in hopes of watching the parents return.

Not only did we not see the parents, but ominous rain began falling while we were away. As darkness was near, we returned to the nest for one last look. No, there were no adults present that we could see, and even the juvenile was now gone. After a few minutes all three of us observed a huge commotion in the nest. Huge wings lifted up and then disappeared back inside. About once a minute we watched the behavior recur--the sight of big, black wings rising up, up, up, flapping for about ten seconds, and then disappearing. After about five minutes, as we observed this again, something different happened--this time one of the juveniles flapped itself up onto one of the tree branches and stopped. With excitement in her voice, Jenny said quietly, "It's 'limbing,'" (strengthening its wings for eventual flight). "I've been a wildlife biologist for eighteen years and this is the first time I have seen this. You are getting quite a treat."

When the rain subsided a little, we ventured from the car. Right before dusk, in the last rain-obscured sunlight of the evening, Jenny saw it first and then Mike and I realized that yes, there was an adult near the nest. He was further out on the limb than the juvenile; he was partially hidden by big branches; but his white head and tail were unmistakable. Our goal was realized: we were seeing an adult Bald Eagle.

The darkness made only a brief glimpse possible. But even if the sighting was short, it was definite, and we were satisfied. However, more was yet to come: Jenny mentioned "You know, this is the same road you'll take when you leave town tomorrow morning." So, after

(continued on page 5)

9/7/97...We're back, but I can't honestly say we're happy to be here because we miss the traveling. "Here" is a house in a new development in Creedmoor, and new construction seems to be keeping the birds away. We have seen Mourning Doves, Indigo Buntings, Summer Tanagers, titmice, chickadees, crows and hummers in our yard, and a Great Blue Heron and a Pileated Woodpecker in our air space, but the bird activity is nothing like it was at our old place.

Our backyard for the past year, though, was absolutely fantastic. We pulled our pop-up camper through three Canadian provinces and forty-four states, so our "backyard" was incredible. We did not intend our trip to be a birding one; we just wanted to see the U.S., so we did no killer birding. When we visited national wildlife refuges, we pretty much stayed in the truck because Niki, our black and white wobbler, traveled with us and NWRs restrict dogs on trails and being left in vehicles. Still, I added 106 birds to my life list. CJ didn't add as many, but his list was longer than mine when we started out in July 1997.

We saw new birds in Maine and Nova Scotia, a place we loved. Because Niki couldn't go on the boat for a puffin tour, CJ went first, with the idea that he would stay ashore with Niki later for me to take the tour. However, CJ saw only one puffin and didn't get a good look at that one, so I decided to forget the boat tour. We added new birds spatteringly through northern Michigan and Wisconsin and just north of Duluth, MN, but a cold front was pushing into the Minneapolis area after we'd been there a few days, and we headed south in a hurry. We spent a cold, windy night in the middle of a cornfield-turned-campground in central Iowa, tried to find a secluded campground in Missouri and ended up in an area out of *Deliverance*, and finally made it to Little Rock, Arkansas, just in time for the warblers to pass through. We stayed a few days watching the tiny birds flit around the treetops over our camper, visited friends and drove south for the warmer climate of South Texas.

We entered a whole different world. We saw at least one new bird each day, and most days brought more than one. We spent a total of six weeks in South and West Texas, two in November and the month of February. When we set up

Backyard Birding

with Frances J. Nelson



camp, we put up a feeder, scattered seed on the ground, set out a water dish and suspended orange halves from flimsy shrub limbs. In the Davis Mountains of West Texas, I video-taped Altamira Orioles, Verdins, Curve-billed Thrashers, chachalacas, Pyrrhuloxias and White-crowned Sparrows at our feeding stations. A wonderful experience.

After leaving Texas, we went to Bosque del Apache NWR in New Mexico, but most of the birds had gone north, so that was a bit disappointing. However, we did see several coyotes roaming around and three porcupines sleeping in trees. The birding in the Grand Canyon wasn't much better, but we weren't there to see birds. The scenery was spectacular, and we did add Steller's Jays and Pigmy Nuthatches, but those were the only new ones. I did get a nice video segment of two Red-tailed Hawks swooping and diving over the canyon.

Arizona was better. We visited friends in Tucson, and their backyard feeders fed Lark Buntings, Anna's Hummingbirds and Gambel's Quail which I also video-taped. Once we left Tucson, however, the birds thinned out. We each found fourteen new birds, but that was pretty poor picking compared to Texas. We were a little early

for migrants in California, Oregon and Washington, and the weather was too cold for even minimal birding in Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. By that time we were a little homesick and began our trek home, with a week-long stop in Oklahoma with CJ's family.

Now, though, we're ready to hit the road again, but that's not to be. I signed a new three-year contract with North Carolina Central University, so we will be parked for a while. To be sure, our backyard will become more popular for birds, and I will hear from you about your birds. Call me at (919) 528-1156 or write to 2061 Ferbow Street, Creedmoor, NC 27522.

A Note from Martha

Dear CBC'ers,

I must say "so long" now that my one-year term as "Backyard Birding" columnist is at an end. I'm sure everyone joins me in welcoming Frances Nelson back home. Bob, Scooter and I enjoyed sharing our backyard adventures with you. But the best part was getting to know you through your wonderful letters and calls. My thanks go to Clyde Smith for letting me serve this past year and thanks to Herman and Gail Lankford for introducing me to CBC and birding by ear. I hope I get to meet all of you in person some day. And now don't forget to write and tell Frances about the birds in your backyard!

Martha

Hummingbirds in Winter

During its fall retreat, the CBC Executive Committee discussed the current thinking on feeding hummingbirds in winter. The consensus was that it is not a harmful practice to keep hummingbird feeders up in the winter months. It was also noted that more and more reports of what had been considered western-only species are being received from those who have maintained feeders in the Carolinas during the winter.

If you maintain a hummingbird feeder this winter, please report any sightings of hummers to the CBC Rare Bird Alert or the Carolinabirds list server.

Care and Feeding of Young Birders

When Clyde reminded me it was time to start thinking about suggesting some more children's books on birds I was a little hesitant. I hadn't seen any really good new ones out in the last year. However, my summer conference in San Francisco (with a side trip to Pt. Reyes) quickly changed my mine. I discovered several brand new titles and a couple of older ones I missed earlier. So here are some of the literary treasures I found on the coast along with a few lifers.

Every child loves secret places. You probably had one of your very own where you could watch and marvel at the natural world around you. But what can a city kid do? Well it seems Janet and Peter helped a young boy find a special wild place smack dab in the middle of the city. In *Secret Place* by Eve Bunting (\$14.95, Clarion Books, 1996), the boy tells us about the 'river' he found hidden in among the tall smokestacks and old warehouses. And of how his obviously birding neighbors, Mrs. Arren, Mr. Ramirez and Janet and Peter (a couple) helped him identify the birds that frequented the area - egrets, mallards, teal, sparrows. Ted Rand, one of my favorite illustrators, does a wonderful job of contrasting the bleakness of the city with the richness of the river area. He also captures the excitement and camaraderie of watching wild animals live their simple, everyday life. There is a wonderful illustration showing the young narrator looking through a pair of binoculars with an absolutely ecstatic look on his face. This is a great book for communicating the specialness of encounters with nature and that those encounters can occur in the most unlikely spots.

Another story of discovery is *Hawk Hill* by Suzie Gilbert (\$14.95, Chronicle Books, 1996). Peter, a shy fellow, has had his life uprooted just as the leaves are turning because of a family move. In his loneliness he seeks refuge on a high hill to watch the birds migrating southward. During his hilltop wanderings he discovers a woman who runs a rehabilitation center for injured birds of prey. The rest of this warm story is about how Peter learns to overcome his shyness and lets go of his

sadness. Woven into this coming of age story the reader learns a great deal about raptors and how they are rehabilitated. The illustrations depict a wide range of birds of prey which are identified and discussed briefly at the end of the story. Although the book appears to be a picture book this is a substantial story and would be ideal for children grades 3-6 who are interested in raptors.

Although Jim Arnosky likes to watch birds high on a hill and in secret places one of his favorite places to watch them is near water. In *Watching Water Birds* (\$16.00, National Geographic Society, 1997) he shares with the reader not only what he has learned from watching birds in and around water but also what he has seen. This book is like a peek into naturalist's field notebook. He introduces the reader to a wide variety of common birds which live on, in, or around water - loons, grebes, mergansers, ducks, gulls, and herons. The illustrations are meticulous and some are life size. He also includes side illustrations which depict such events as how a duck folds its wings and how a heron flies with his neck tightly coiled until just before landing. The text about the birds focuses more on unique habits and characteristics than on identification. He also gives tips on how to get close to some of the birds for better looks. Children and adults will find this fascinating and enlightening.

As children begin to watch birds they want to know more about them. I like to recommend they read a biography of a particular species to help them become more intimately acquainted with them. One such biography is written and photographed by Jennifer A. Loomis. It's called *A Duck in a Tree* (\$18.95, Stemmer House, 1996). For most children this will seem like an unusual place for a duck but not if it's a Wood Duck. This beautifully photographed book chronicles the life of a pair of Wood Ducks which visit a pond near the author's home in Maine. Everything is included - courtship, nesting, mating, fledging, molting, etc. The author must have spent hours capturing the life of these birds. Her obvious admiration for them is apparent in

her prose. As an added bonus the reader receives directions for making a Wood Duck nesting box and list of books for further study. A delightful book which begs to be looked at over and over again.

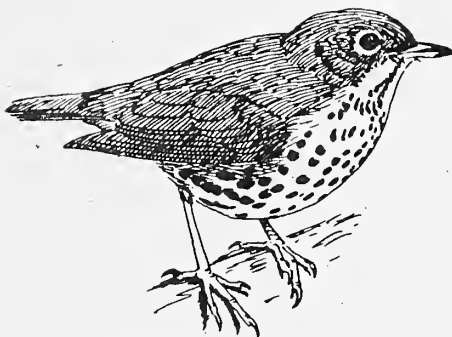
The fact that birds can fly fascinates most children. Many in fact try their own hand at soaring with some abrupt endings. A safer way to experiment with flying and avoid unwanted bruises is by making *Paper Birds that Fly* (Sterling Publishing Co., Inc., 1996). In this book Norman Schmidt adds a delightful twist to the idea of paper airplanes. The first chapter introduces the reader to the physics of flight as it pertains to birds. It is very detailed but easy to follow. The remainder of the book consists of instructions on how to construct paper birds that really fly. Although the basic design is similar for all the birds the directions include modification so the finished product will look like an American Goldfinch or Vaux's Swift. All in all there are 14 different species represented. A brief paragraph is included which describes the unique characteristics of the species. These are not simple patterns. They will challenge young and old alike. But what better way to pass the time on miserable winter days?

Birds fly for a number of reasons. In *This Way Home* by Lisa Westberg Peters (Henry Holt and Company, 1994), a group of young Savannah Sparrows find themselves being urged to fly to a place they have never seen before. Thus begins a tale of migration. Throughout the poetically written text the author tries to convey some of the wonders of bird migration and also explain how birds accomplish this marvelous feat. The wind swept illustrations convey a sense of mystery. I found this book particularly interesting because of the species. Not many people take notice of little brown birds much less know they consist of more than one species. Chronicling the journey of a Savannah Sparrow is an unusual approach.

Although the Carolina piedmont and coastal plain are on the winter end of the Savannah Sparrow's migration, it is on the
(continued on next page)

Young Birders (continued)

other end for many neotropical migrants. Each spring many of us wait patiently for the first golden flute-like notes of the Wood Thrush. When we hear it we know spring has truly arrived. But what perils has the bird had to survive to be able to sing in your woods? *Flute's Journey: The Life of a Wood Thrush* by Lynne Cherry (\$15.00, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997) will help children understand the dangerous circumstances under which birds all birds must live. This is not just a story about a bird but an entire habitat. The reader will become acquainted with many of the other neotropical birds as well as permanent residents which dwell in the woods with the thrush. As director of an organization committed to connecting children to the



natural world through literature, Lynn Cherry's love of nature and children is apparent in both the text and illustrations. her illustrations are detailed works of art which draw the reader into the complex world of nature.

The Wood Thrush's song is so unique and mysterious children learn it quickly. Once children learn the song it opens up a

whole new way of knowing a bird. *Birdsong* by Audrey Wood (\$15.00, Harcourt Brace & Company, 1997) is a great book for helping children become aware of sounds birds make to communicate with each other. Here they will become familiar with both the calls and habitat of fourteen relatively common birds. Each two page spread features one bird, its song, habitat and a couple of children enjoying its presence. As an added bonus the border of each spread depicts a state flower characteristic of each habitat. This title is just one more wonderful way to introduce children to the pleasures of both watching and listening to feathered friends. -- **Judy Walker**, CIMC/Atkins Library, UNC Charlotte, Charlotte, NC, jwalker@email.uncc.edu.

A View of a King (continued)

a fond goodbye to our eagle-mentor and a good night's sleep, Mike and I set our sights on another viewing.

Though the weather was still wet and cloudy, the light was somewhat better. Would an adult be at the nest at 8:00 a.m., or would both parents be gone fishing? Fledgling eaglets are ravenous by daybreak, so there was a good chance we had already seen all we would see of an adult bird. We pulled up into the dirt parking place, set our binoculars toward the nest--and there it was: an adult Bald Eagle, on a different limb than the night before but in an almost identical

position. The improved light made his white head and tail much more obvious against the black of the branch. He watched us, motionless, the bright yellow of his huge, strong beak a striking contrast to the white feathers of his head. He did not move or show any fear toward the humans who were studying him so intently. Occasionally he would slowly turn his head toward the nest, and then back to us, but he was as content to observe us as we were to observe him. As the ruler of this kingdom, he was in full control..

Reluctantly, Mike and I broke away from the scene and headed our car back onto the highway, into the stream of traffic, amid people who had no idea that

such a treasured sight was so close by. We were awed by our viewing of the massive adult, amazed that the birdwatching highlight of our trip had been so spectacular. No wonder the Bald Eagle is our national bird. Perhaps it would be better to call him the "king bird" of our country. His Majesty deserves the honor.

CBC Rare Bird Alert

(704) 332-BIRD

Membership Application and Order Form

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Send Materials Indicated

☐ Individual (\$15)	☐ Affiliate Club (\$20)	☐ CBC Cloth arm patch \$1.50 ea., \$1.25 ea. in quantity
☐ Family (\$20)	☐ Contributing (\$35)	☐ CBC Decals (vinyl stick-on) \$2.00 ea., \$1.75 ea. in quantity
☐ Student (\$10)	☐ Patron (\$50)	☐ Checklists 10/\$1.75, 25/\$4.25, 50/\$8.25, 75/\$12, 100/\$15
☐ Library/Institution (\$15)	☐ Life (\$250)	

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== Welcome New Members ==

Janice & David Allen
Pollocksville, NC

Janice Fanning
Charleston, SC

Kate Hoover
Richmond, VA

Steve & Becky Leopard
Durham, NC

Bruce A. Marshall, MD
Clinton, SC

Dwayne & Lori Martin
Claremont, NC

Mary S. McLaurin
Washington, NC

Peter D. Miller
Hickory, NC

**Wynnde St. John &
Kevin Sorenson**
Clayton, NC

Vin Stanton
Asheville, NC

Deceased

Miss Gene Evans
Rockville, MD

Peter C. Petersen
Iowa Bird Editor
Davenport, Iowa

CBC Winter Field Trip

Outer Banks Winter Birds

January 16-18, 1998

Limit: 20 Participants (minimum age 16, minors must be accompanied by
registered adult) **Cost:** \$40 (\$35 CBC members and Friends of
Museum)

Leaders: John & Paula Wright

A winter field trip to Pea Island NWR and the Cape Hatteras National Seashore jointly
sponsored by CBC and the NC Museum of Natural Sciences. Details on registration
will appear in the November/December Newsletter.

Carolina Bird Club, Inc.



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